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SOCIALISM NOW!

Democracy's Only Defense

by MURRAY KEMPTON

Young People's Socialist League
Youth Section • Socialist Party
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INTRODUCTION

The Young People's Socialist League is proud to present this pamphlet to those young people who are living in, and therefore reacting against the world of war, oppression and misery that surrounds us on every hand.

We publish this in the hope that it will bring a new hope to those who have been able to see only dark despair ahead. We hope, too, that it will bring a note of realism to those many who hope that at the end of the present war will come a world worth living in.

These hopes must be realized now. Either the old system must go and be replaced by an orderly, humane and rational use of the physical, cultural and human resources of the world; or fascism will engulf all the world. And this no matter which side wins the war.

If you want to join with those who are striving, the world over, to end the terrible cycle of war, armed peace, and new war; if you want to help make the United States the paradise of plenty that it could be; if you want to keep America out of war; if you want to end the domination of the military that is conscription, the domination of the industrialist, landlord and banker that is capitalism, the rule over foreign peoples that is imperialism; then you belong in the Young People's Socialist League, youth section of the Socialist Party.

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FOR free men there is something about slavery that does not smell quite good. We are driven down the road to death and destruction, slowly and painfully; and, if we go at all, it is out of the conviction that there is no other defense against our enemies and no other path to freedom still left open.

Hitler's aggression has apparently forced that choice today.

Peacetime conscription came, for example, as a giant stride after the first hesitant steps along the road to an emergency war dictatorship. It can only be justified as part of a dangerous but desperately necessary effort to stop German aggression short of world dominion.

And, peculiarly enough, the very people who are most vocal in their fear and hatred for Hitlerism are the most faithful in their imitation of the Nazis. For, *it is no coincidence that* Sherman Minton, then an outspoken advocate of intervention abroad, dedicated himself on the floor of the Senate last summer to the task of "out-Hitlering Hitler."

Huey Long once said that fascism would come to the United States in the name of anti-fascism. Huey would hardly have been surprised at the turn events are taking in this country today. There is a Nazi pattern in the military state towards which America is driving; and our defense program apes that of the Third Reich in details far more important than mechanization and the parachute offensive.

The Nazis have made the road to Hitlerism easy for us.

Let us take the case of Mr. Roosevelt, whose liberal New Deal has been credited with many distinct social contributions. When the president assumed office in 1933, he might well have concluded that America's depression provided an insoluble

domestic problem and adopted the cynical expedient of diverting public discontent to foreign quarrels.

Every instrument of government would then have been turned to the production of armaments. Under cover of national necessity Mr. Roosevelt would have wheedled, cajoled or beaten the people into abandonment of those free instruments which might otherwise have been an obstacle to the dictatorship of the West Point gang. He would have drawn the nations of Latin America into a vast economic cartel ruled by two-bit pro-consuls acting by sufferance of his State Department. He would have offered conscription and the labor camp to a generation of jobless and despairing young people. And he would have built this regime of hunger and imperialism on a tissue of falsehood and double-dealing, mere opposition to which would have suffered to bring down upon his opponents the charge of treason to the republic.

Is there any doubt that he would now be known to us as America's first dictator?

Yet since the beginning of the European war, we have seen Mr. Roosevelt do every one of these things without forfeiting the support of a large majority of the socially responsible people to whom the nation's liberties are supposed to mean so much.

During the last twenty years, Felix Frankfurter has been an ornament to every organized effort to preserve and extend the American bill of rights. As a professor at Harvard, he led the fight to save Sacco and Vanzetti from the death which finally claimed them in a Massachusetts electric chair. In the early days of the New Deal Dr. Frankfurter took a conspicuous part in framing the social program which is still responsible for the president's hold on the American labor movement.

A year or so ago Frankfurter was appointed to the United States Supreme Court. He has taken part in several important decisions which have both clarified the Bill of Rights and extended its application in public life.

Until Hitler's invasion of the lowlands last spring, he and a majority of his colleagues showed anything but a disposition to restrict the private rights of individuals to freedom of publication, speech and worship.

Then, in June 1940, a startling break occurred. Two members of Jehovah's Witnesses, an obscure religious sect, were haled into court because their children refused to salute the American flag on the ground that such an act violated the command, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The Supreme Court, with only one dissent, held that, in "times like the present" legislatures have the right to enforce "various means to evoke that unifying sentiment without which there can ultimately be no liberties, civil or religious."

The author of that opinion was Justice Frankfurter.

The immediate effects of the flag salute decision make it unnecessary for us to go into the theoretical problems raised by this reinterpretation of the Bill of Rights in the light of European military affairs. Within a week of its publication there were nearly a hundred instances of attack on Jehovah's Witness groups by widely-scattered vigilante groups. Hysteria has transformed an inoffensive cult into an arm of Hitler's spy service; and, what is worse, more than one of America's great liberals has given public support to the resultant witch-hunt.

Justice Frankfurter will probably tell you that the right of the individual must be sacrificed to the interests of a state which is girding itself for war against the enemies of democracy.

He and Mr. Roosevelt have overlooked the one overwhelming lesson of the events since Adolf Hitler came to power. *In the fight against Nazism, we cannot depend on people and methods which are in themselves fascist.*

For, out of the tragedy of the last seven years, the one sure lesson is that which cries out that only a free people can defeat the dictators.

The enemies of freedom are working overtime both here and abroad. They will not be checked by the phrases and symbols of a dead and sterile past. It is for us the living to so organize our national life that we may breath free from the dictators and their allies both now and tomorrow. By this time we should have our fill of strategists who spend their time mapping action for the rearguard, and of programs which contain no hope for a brighter future and only the prospect of grim and desperate sacrifice for the present.

Fascism Without Hope

First of all, you can't fight fascism unless you know what it is. And, for our purposes that sort of knowledge has to go deeper than the intimate details of Herr Hitler's personal psyche and even the more superficially brutal aspects of the Nazi regime itself.

For other nations have carried out pogroms in years gone by; nor is the policy of dictatorship at home and, aggression abroad an exclusively Hitlerian invention.

What then are the historical features unique to German fascism?

Three years ago former Senator Burke spent a day or so in intimate study of the Third Reich and came back with a

healthy respect for Hitler's organizational methods. The Senator, who gave over the best part of his last six years in office to intruding emery dust into the wheels of the National Labor Relations Board, rejoiced particularly in the docile attitude displayed by German labor. Here, he averred, was a recognition of the national spirit which the employees of General Motors at that time sitting on Alfred P. Sloan's doorstep, might do well to imitate.

Burke, while never especially acute as a social critic, had put his finger precisely on the point at which the Nazi system differed most from that of the United States and the advanced industrial economies of pre-war Europe. Labor disputes are as natural to our society as ants at a picnic. They are a concrete form of what socialists have long recognized as a characteristic feature of the history of mankind—the effort of the producing classes to improve their conditions and ways of life in conflict with those who control the means of production. We call this the class struggle, and it is by no means a mystic concept but rather a fact of life familiar to Tom Girdler and your loyal trade unionist alike.

Now apparently Hitler has accomplished the miracle of liquidating the natural antagonism of economic classes. There is no place in Germany for the quarrels over profit margins or the labor disputes which now are said to hamper the American defense program; what we have instead is a phenomenon of national unity, an entire economic society organized into a war machine without the slightest evidence of friction.

We can best understand this prime Nazi achievement if we study the social atmosphere in which Hitler came to power. Germany in 1933 was a capitalist country sinking under the weight of its own contradictions. If you look at the business

charts of those days, you can see a long range decline which had at last brought industrial profits to the vanishing point. Most German economists saw in that thin downward line the chief reason for the shrinkage of production, and consequent unemployment. (And, if you visit Dun and Bradstreet's in New York, the girl at the reception desk will smile when she gives you a three-colored chart which, in spite of the peaks and valleys of the last twenty years, shows a steadily declining rate in the profits of American business. The gentlemen who run Dun and Bradstreet's won't smile, however, for here they recognize the major factor in the industrial depression which has afflicted this country for more than a decade.)

Before the war private enterprise could seek undeveloped territories as a market for the goods which it could not sell with profit at home. Hemmed in by the terms of the Versailles Treaty, post-war Germany was unable to look for such opportunities.

With the profit motive thus largely removed from operation, the intervention of state machinery became necessary to prevent an entire breakdown of the economic system. As a consequence, private initiative gave way to the collective will.

This collective will was, in no sense, however, the sort of supreme expression which might bring a sudden mysterious harmony to the hitherto irreconcilable antagonism of worker and capitalist. For Germany was faced with a choice of two collectivisms. In one case, a workers' government might be established which would take control of the productive process in the interest of democratic socialism. There was no other method by which the roots of the class struggle could be finally eliminated.

The Nazis offered a second alternative. In its essence, Na-

tional Socialism represented as complete a victory for the old masters of Germany as a genuine socialist revolution could have meant for the workers. The Third Reich is organized with the sole view of forcing the redivision of the world market without which capitalist Germany must starve. Hitler has substituted for socialist collectivism another form of planned economy, with all the terrible efficiency of a modern industrial apparatus constructed for total war. Here was a regime which demanded a maximum of public sacrifice in the national interest, and German labor out of the experience of seven years' repression and hunger, can testify as to Nazi methods of securing its fullest cooperation.

Although a desperate capitalist order might smash the trade unions and every other instrument of socialist action, still the basic fact of the class struggle would remain. If Germany were simply a naked dictatorship by the owners of property, then it would be doomed to collapse because the great masses of its subjects could not be whipped into the gigantic effort necessary for survival.

Hitler has succeeded because he turned the revolutionary discontent of the German people against their own interests, and proclaimed the existence of a new class enemy to replace the junker and factory owner of tradition. A decade of propaganda has finally established the plutocratic nations of the West and their Jewish allies in the Weimar Republic as sole authors of the post-war depression. The Nazi legions ride forth therefore to reclaim the wealth which they consider theirs by right. The miraculous liquidation of the class struggle was, it seems, the result of a skillful combination of repression and demagoguery.

We have seen, for one thing, that Nazism is the result

neither of certain aberrations in the German character nor of Hitler's maniacal genius. It lies deep in the conditions of a contracting capitalist economy which took concrete form in mass unemployment and the breakdown of production. The resultant chaos could only be resolved by a centralized state control which could suppress the class struggle and bring some degree of planning to the anarchy of the old order. In Hitler's Germany, this has meant the organization of a collectivist military state.

And, whatever you may think of Nazism you can't deny its revolutionary character. The workers of Germany are hungry and they think they know where food can be found.

Yet the United States, shining hope of the democracies, has known a full decade when millions of its people have lived on the meagerest subsistence level while the productive machinery operated at less than two-thirds of capacity. Mr. Roosevelt is now demanding patriotism from a generation of young men and women who have grown up in the midst of conditions exactly paralleling those which gave Hitler his first opportunity. German youth with a world to win fights against troops with no banners but that of an America which has denied to most of them even the smallest stakes in ultimate victory. We need look only to the French debacle for instances of the futility of trying to oppose a revolutionary collectivism with the obsolete tools of capitalist tradition.

For it is a revolutionary collectivism that the Western world faces today. The anti-fascists happened to lose the first battle in Germany because the native contradictions inherent in an economy of profit were artificially ripened under the conditions

We have seen, for one thing, that Nazism is the result of Versailles. But those same contradictions exist today in

the United States and impel us towards an identical set of consequences.

Throwing Out the Baby

Democracy has had seven years in which to fight the Nazi tide. The history of that fight has been a history of timidity, compromise, and defeat which reached its climax in the fall of France.

One acute observer has drawn an important lesson from the story of the democratic defeat. From the destructive point of view, he finds a paramount Nazi virtue in consistency. You never find Hitler passing a liberal law, or supporting a free government, or acting as if the democratic way of life were anything but a threat to Nazism wherever it exists. Yet the so-called democracies have constantly given aid and comfort to a German dictator and his allies who have sworn to destroy them utterly.

Hitler's most significant triumphs have come about because he was always able to find people of similar stripe in what was ostensibly the enemy camp. The first Nazi cabinet could never have been formed without the active cooperation of the Hugenburg nationalists, who as the official representatives of German industrial bureaucracy were a rough equivalent of the Republican party in this country.

Neville Chamberlain and the British Tories tolerated German territorial ambitions because they believed that Hitler was a stable force in Central Europe. And, then England finally went to war only after it appeared that further concessions would seriously imperil the existence of the Empire.

We hear much of the word appeasement these days. In essence an appeaser is one who will accept fascist methods in order to preserve a status quo satisfactory to himself. The men of Munich were not fumbling political misfits. In their off-the-record utterances, they were realists quick to laugh at those who spoke of common decency; they have their counterpart wherever there is an industrialist who makes national defense an excuse for strike-breaking and in every factory, farm, and colonial estate where, by force or fraud, men live by the sweat of their inferiors.

And appeasement is not confined to foreign affairs. Democracy in Europe did not die in the fighting in the streets; it languished and sickened in its own bed. The appeasers abroad were fascists at home.

France, like Jesus Christ, was crucified by a mob led by the best people in town. Her rulers preferred a fascist victory to the danger of social upheaval. We should not forget that, during a period of gravest national emergency, business men on the Bourse sabotaged the Blum government by exporting desperately needed financial resources. These French Henry Fords preferred to join their government in an assault on labor's rights rather than cooperate in the production of military weapons on a narrower margin of profit. Now we see Petain, Flandin and Bonnet as representatives of a middle class so shot through with corruption that it never ceased to traffic with the forces of Hitlerism even at the height of French patriotic sentiment.

"Your true Tory," as a great American historian once said, "is always a fascist at heart."

There is nothing inconsistent in the so-called mistakes of the democracies. Like every revolutionary, Hitler is fighting a civil

war. He is winning up to this point because he has been shrewd enough to recognize the fascist potential which was inherent in the ruling class of every country in Western Europe.

England stands today as the last link in the ring of steel which formed such an imposing defense against Nazism hardly four years ago. Yet the people of Britain, the unanimity of whose sacrificial spirit fills the dispatches of American correspondents, are actually the prey of social struggles as profound as any their country has known.

There are at least three groups contending for mastery of a victorious England. And, two of these groups are dedicated to the preservation of an Empire which has been the most consistently reactionary force in European politics.

That's not a pleasant status quo. To the 375 million people of British India the vast slogans of democracy must have a hollow sound from the lips of Winston Churchill. For the man who is now presented to us as the personification of the bulldog spirit of liberty-loving Englishmen was one of the six extremists who voted against the travesty of a democratic system which we know today as the Indian Constitution.

Leonard Amery, present minister for India, joined with Mr. Churchill in opposing that constitution. The jailing of Jawaharlal Nehru, leader of the Indian National Congress was an indication of what those sympathetic with colonial reform might expect from these two exponents of Victorian imperialism. At this moment, English prisons are jammed with thousands of humbler but no less sincere people whose only crime was advocacy of freedom for the subjects of an empire which even now proclaims its concern for the rights of small European nations.

As a matter of fact, Churchill and Amery are two of the most anachronistic figures in England. Their latest years in Parliament were spent in a sort of imperial twilight quoting the works of Rudyard Kipling to a House of Tories long since grown fat from too many victories. They represent a final effort to revive the rampant imperialism of old Eton in the Empire's last extremity. We need have no illusions about the fate of any movement to free Europe in their hands.

As a matter of fact the vast majority of Conservative politicians accept Churchill with ill grace. They are too discredited to do much talking right now; but in their own way they keep pretty busy. Their financial allies dominate the Home office set-up, and they are convinced that they can withstand the efforts of labor groups to dislodge them. But, at this moment, they are chiefly concerned with the sort of world that will come out of the war.

More than anything else these people fear the social upheaval that may come after Hitler is beaten. Rather than take this chance, they are quick to join any discussion which might lead to a peace along lines preserving the Empire while giving the Nazis a free hand on the continent.

But the real vigor of the anti-fascist struggle is bound up in the British working class. A negotiated peace which would leave Hitler in power could only be enforced by breaking this opposition.

As the war goes on, however, and the tide of Nazism is checked, British labor faces an accounting with the Churchill wing of the Conservative party. First of all, the prime minister must attempt to establish a war dictatorship to carry the necessary campaign of attrition. After a British victory, Churchill, with the assistance of the United States, could

stand like a rock in opposition to the kind of peace which labor would advocate.

The working people of Britain want a Europe dedicated to the peace which comes from democratic cooperation. Churchill would enforce that sort of balanced power under which England has fattened and Europe suffered for generations. There is no way to compromise these two concepts in domestic and foreign policy. And, under cover of unanimity Great Britain moves ever closer to an irrepressible conflict between them.

Tarnished Galahad

We need not look beyond the present defense program to see the same conflict here in the United States. American business men are not slow to support the leagues for national unity which mushroom up around us every day, but their cooperation at the gun-forging is much less willing.

Last summer the American press stood silent while airplane manufacturers haggled with the War Department over profits. While industry was thus displaying its bargaining power not one new model came off the assembly belt.

Yet our national government has on occasion talked very tough when labor has displayed a similar concern for its prerogatives. The Attorney-General of the United States, so close-mouthed when last summer's capital strike was in progress, began to talk vaguely about foreign agents within two days after 2,500 workers in the Vultee Aircraft Company's California plant began to walk-out last November.

Americans concerned with the fate of democracy in Europe devote considerable time to discussing methods of strike pre-

vention. At the same time, private sources in Washington buzz with thoroughly authenticated stories of business men who have attempted to corner the market in various raw materials in hopes of reviving briefly the splendors of 1929. The Vultee strike seems to have crowded these important examples of pre-paid patriotism out of the public prints.

Much of the business of anti-fascist defense has been entrusted to corporations whose labor policy would warm the heart of a Nazi *gauleiter*.

The National Defense Advisory Commission seems to peddle appeasement with a vengeance.

There is a real and sobering war going on beneath the facade of national unity. And, unless the idea of public service can win out over the motive of private profit, the defense of American democracy looms as a hopeless job.

This goes beyond the question of foreign policy. The forces, now engaged in the gigantic campaign to sabotage the defense program, differ widely among themselves on the question of intervention abroad.

Men like James A. Mooney of General Motors, for example, are not too disturbed by the prospect of a Hitlerized Europe. Agreements among equals, they tell us, are seldom broken; and a strong America can deal with the Nazis even if their empire lasts a thousand years. Their definition of a strong America comes straight from the pages of *Mein Kampf*, and we should not be surprised when they support every swollen item of the Roosevelt arms budget while hedging on the question of aid to Britain.

Many members of the war party are business men like Mooney who cannot reconcile themselves to the curtailment of

foreign trade and consequent disruption of our economic life which a Nazi victory may involve. The liberal advocates of intervention may or not recognize the moral ground from which their allies fight.

But the business imperialist is no humble soul. His philosophy dominates the most highly-organized sections of the pro-war bloc, and its influence goes far towards explaining the profoundly reactionary character of much of Mr. Roosevelt's foreign policy.

We must not forget that the President has consistently given support and cooperation to whatever group dominated the foreign policy of the British Empire at a particular period. The United States was the first country to recognize the Franco government in Spain after Chamberlain's policy of non-intervention had finally brought it to power. We have blown hot and cold on Japan's China adventure in close harmony with the British Foreign Office. Even now, as England prepares once more to appease fascist Spain, there is strong sentiment in Washington for a similar move from our own government.

At this moment, Roosevelt and Churchill have identical war aims. If America goes to war, and supports Churchill at the council table, British labor's blueprint for Europe will have little relation to reality. Keeping America out of war is important if only because there is no other way to aid the real democrats of Britain in their impending struggle with the prime minister.

The time has come to recognize the real character of the war Hitler fights. The failure of American interventionists is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in their present attitude towards sending food to the occupied areas of Europe.

In the eyes of the William White Committee, this resolves

itself into a question of strategy. If you feed the small democracies, you release provisions for Germany and consequently appease the hunger which may start the continental revolution.

Starving innocent peoples in order to win a war is old stuff to the professional soldier. In this case, however, we can challenge that policy from a viewpoint no less realistic.

Hitler, as we have said so often, is fighting a civil war. So far his opponents have signally failed to match his capacity for finding support behind enemy lines. To send food to Europe at this moment is a part of true democratic strategy; it will bring new hope to peoples who must now depend on the Nazis for the barest necessities of life: more than that, it will pose the dramatic contrast between the guns of total war and the butter of the total democracy which is the fruit of any genuine anti-fascist struggle.

Hitler has a fifth-column in his own house. But we can only win our allies in occupied Europe if we begin to treat them as a good deal more than puppets in a strategy purely military in conception.

Last Boat for Jerusalem

We have talked a long time about democratic disasters.

And you can stack the facts any way you choose; they still add up to final defeat if we accept the philosophy under which the United States government now proposes to fight the Nazis.

The current drive to militarize America cannot be confused with real anti-fascism. Those who now press it look forward to an empire built on the hunger and repression inherent in an economy of armaments and extending its control deep into

Latin America. They work with desperate speed to save the privileges of a society in decline with a new model fascist army.

These people must and can be checked. The great mass of ordinary Americans are still torn between their hatred of the Nazis and the war dictatorship which is the only alternative the rulers of their country can offer.

There is just one program which can fulfill their aspirations.

First of all, an end must be made to the mockery of starvation and unemployment in the richest country in the world. Hitler has no greater ally than the vast impersonal fact of factories idle while millions of Americans need their products desperately.

There is no real national unity which is not based on plenty for all. Just as we recognize that resistance to fascism is hopeless so long as the rulers of industry control our defense program, so we must conclude that the motive of private profit stands as the chief bar to the truly democratic world which alone makes war against Hitler worth the fighting and sure in its victory.

For us in America, there yet remains a choice between an enforced and a democratic collectivism. We can guarantee our defense against Fascism here and abroad only through the institution of Socialist planned production under democratic controls. Such a system alone can eradicate the causes of native reaction and provide the economy of plenty which could rally the enthusiastic support of the masses of America to its defense.

And, in the Europe of the Nazis as well, whatever hope there is for the anti-Fascist movement is bound up with the

aspirations of revolutionary Socialism. Whatever temporary successes he may achieve through his policy of repression and conquest, Hitler is unable to provide a final solution for the basic causes of popular discontent. His civil war on the continent did not come to an end with the capitulation of France. It goes on in new and as yet under-developed forms all over the occupied areas; and the crushing weight of German imperialism will serve only to heighten its intensity. The underground forces upon which the final victory over Nazism depends might struggle as successfully for the revival of the Holy Roman Empire as for the reconstruction of German capitalism. For them Socialism stands first on the order of the day.

An American military state dedicated to the preservation of the obsolete social order is actually the deadly enemy of European anti-fascism. Should the United States go to war against Hitler, our own labor and Socialist movement would fall as first victims, and the anti-Nazis would lose the single effective force which might halt the intervention of American reaction against a German workers' republic.

A Socialist America would represent a defeat for Hitler far outweighing his present triumph. It would raise again the torch of liberty in a world which has almost forgotten the sight of the flame. It would rally and inspire men of good will in every country around a concept of progress which challenges the very fundamentals of Nazism and war.

For, in the last analysis, there is no anti-Fascism but Socialism. At this moment, as the old order lies dying, the ideal of a classless society stands forth as the one clear symbol of the centuries-old battle of the little people of this earth for a measure of freedom, justice and economic security.

"Better Than Ever"

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